UC&C

SMART
GUiDE

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RingCentral®

The way we connect is changing.

Driven by trends like digital transformation (DX), customer experience (CX), and the rise of remote working, communication has evolved.

Today's companies are interacting through a range of different platforms, using tools to measure performance, and implementing strategies to keep the diverse global workforce connected. Thanks to the cloud and UC&C, businesses don't have to worry about switching between different apps and tools to accomplish their goals.

Discovering the Potential of UC&C

Unified Communication and Collaboration, or UC&C is the strategy that today's brands use to empower their employees with simplicity, context, and mobility. Every year, the UC&C market grows more popular. Experts estimate that the value of the UC&C space will reach $62 billion by 2020. Almost three times the size versus 5 years before.

Beyond simple communication, UC&C also considers the growing importance of "collaboration" one of the biggest trends we've seen in 2018. As work becomes less of a "place" and more of a collection of values and software solutions, "collaboration" has emerged as a critical concern for the average technology team.

Throughout this smart guide, you'll learn everything you need to know about the rise of unified collaboration and communication, how it can support your workforce through applications for messaging, video, VoIP, and collaboration.

We'll also discuss the different strategies that you can use to take advantage of the modern UC&C stack, regardless of whether you're a small business or a large enterprise.

Join us on our exploration of the evolving UC&C marketplace.

Sunny Dhami
Director of Product Marketing,
RingCentral

WHAT IS UC&C?

We're living in a brand-new world spurred by digital transformation.

As technology continues to evolve, we've entered an era where work is no longer confined to a specific desk, phone, or computer screen. Professionals have the freedom to share their skills and pursue new opportunities across the globe, all with nothing but the right device, and a cloud connection.

Now that half the UK workforce is set to work remotely by 2020, and many other countries are following suit, companies need to find a way to serve experts that refuse to be tethered by wires and physical locations. The result has been an influx of fantastic communication tools, designed for almost every touchpoint in the average business. The only problem? We've innovated so fast that the sheer number of communication tools available is enough to overwhelm any worker or IT team.

Fortunately, we have a solution. **Enter UC&C.**

WHAT UC&C BRINGS TO THE DIGITAL WORKFORCE

The term "Unified Communication and Collaboration," or "UC&C" describes not only how we connect different communication systems for the digital workforce, but collaboration tools too!

Seamless UC&C ensures a higher level of interaction throughout the globally-dispersed workforce. It breaks down the silos between enterprise teams, and ensures that no matter where you work, you can still access the same secure system, equipped with:

- Voice & Video Communication
- Presence
- Messaging
- Team Collaboration
- Conferencing
- Screen & Document Sharing

THE BENEFITS OF UC&C

In a world defined by a dizzying mix of platforms designed to suit organisations spread across vast spaces, UC&C simplifies the world of work. The right UC&C platform gathers everything your employees need to connect, share, and work together on ideas in the same streamlined interface.

THE RESULT?

Better productivity: Teams can connect however they feel most comfortable, using any device they choose.

Reduced costs: Because UC&C systems operate on the cloud, they allow companies to shift away from a CapEx model, to an OpEx strategy with fewer initial expenses.

Stronger performance: Because employees can both communicate, and collaborate in an instant, they can solve customer problems faster, and improve your business reputation.

Enhanced user experience: A good UC&C strategy can delight your employees and even reduce turnover in your organisation, by giving people more freedom to work as they choose.

TRENDS DRIVING
THE ADOPTION OF UC&C

The popularity of UC&C systems is growing more every year.

In fact, recent research indicates that the unified communications market will grow significantly by 2020. More than ever, companies facing a changing business are beginning to understand how UC&C can help them better serve clients and employees alike.

Perhaps the biggest trend driving the adoption of UC&C is digital transformation (DX) and the rise of the digital workforce. At its core, the digital workforce thrives on the idea that people should be able to access the tools they need to perform, wherever they are, and whatever device they use. Combine that with the ever-emerging move to cloud communications and agile methodologies, and you've got an environment primed for UC&C.

As the workplace innovates faster, breaches global boundaries, and discovers new opportunities, UC&C is the path to better connections and productivity.

"Consolidation of communication mediums is fast becoming the most important driver for uniting organisations towards common goals, growth and success. The UC market is growing enormously, and people have now become very comfortable with the concept of telecommunications moving to the cloud. Moreover, digitalisation is key to any organisation that's interested in keeping up in today's fast paced, mobile environment."

Sahil Rekhi, Managing Director for EMEA at RingCentral

COMMUNICATION VS. COLLABORATION

The words "communication" and "collaboration" appear so closely together in the modern world, that some people have begun to believe that they mean the same thing.

After all, thanks to the widespread popularity of UC&C, and communication apps equipped with collaboration tools, it's easy to see how the two concepts go hand-in-hand. In fact, collaboration in the workforce simply can't exist without good communication. However, just because the two ideas connect on a fundamental level, doesn't mean they're the same thing.

So, what's the difference?

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COLLABORATION & COMMUNICATION

All companies need communication to thrive.

It doesn't matter whether you're running a small business of 3 or 4 people or a huge enterprise with dedicated contact centres - you need communication. A communication strategy can come in various forms.

> **"**Collaboration is much more than a buzzword. Enabling individuals, teams, and organisations to be able to work together more efficiently from any place on any device is what business leaders around the world are looking to deliver.**"**
>
> **Sunny Dhami, Director of Product Marketing for EMEA at RingCentral**
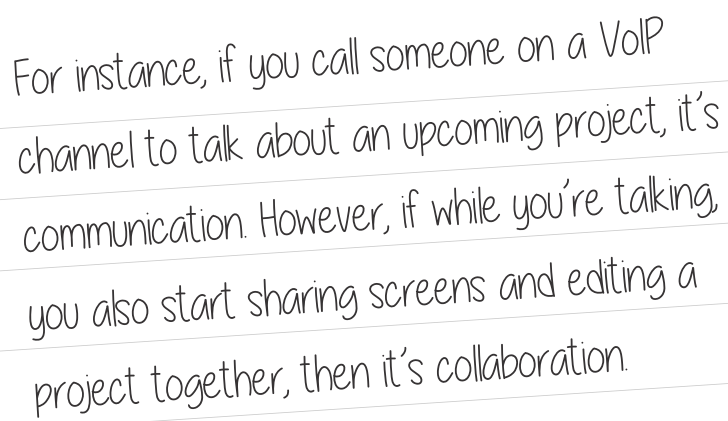
Most organisations have:

An **external** communication strategy:

The plan they use to connect with customers, clients, shareholders, and suppliers. Increasingly, external communication plans are becoming omni-channel, stretching all the way from VoIP, to social media, SMS, and more.

An **internal** communication strategy:

This is the plan companies use to keep internal staff members connected. It ensures that remote workers can connect with in-office employees through video conferences, and everyone can stay in touch in real-time through instant messaging. Like external communication, internal communication often involves multiple channels.

Collaboration comes into the "internal communication" strategy. Where communication is about sharing knowledge, collaboration is about actively working together to achieve mutual goals.

For instance, if you call someone on a VoIP channel to talk about an upcoming project, it's communication. However, if while you're talking, you also start sharing screens and editing a project together, then it's collaboration.

Essentially, **collaboration** brings action to the **communication** space.

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION

The fact that collaboration and communication are so closely connected is what makes them so hard to distinguish at times. Even the "collaboration tools" we see on the market today can blur the definitions a little.

After all, Slack is often touted as a collaboration tool, but sending someone a message on Slack doesn't mean you're collaborating. The option to collaborate is available, but you need to act if you want to go beyond communication.

Ultimately, collaboration in the modern workforce is about providing an avenue for employees, executives, or anyone else in a business to work together on the same project – no matter where they are.

While today, the conversation about "collaboration" is heating up, it's important to remember that communication will always be an underlying ingredient of good collaboration. Without communication, we'd be left with multiple people working on their own versions of a project, using the same tool. Communication provides the insight and knowledge to connect minds across the workforce.

GET COMMUNICATION RIGHT, AND THE REST WILL FOLLOW

Communication and collaboration are natural partners in the digitally transforming and globally-distributed workforce. However, before any enterprise can begin to successfully invest in collaboration tools, they first need to ensure that they're getting the most out of their communication strategy.

If communication isn't clear, accessible, and easy to use across a range of touchpoints, then collaboration can't work. Empower your people to share knowledge; then you can help them to work together on tasks.

CLOUD COMMUNICATIONS

If you've been looking at your business communication strategy lately, then you've probably already heard of "Cloud Communications".

You might have seen it referred to as "Cloud Telephony" or "IP Telephony" which is essentially calls being routed over the internet or an IP network.

Using the internet for making calls is incredibly cost-effective, and though it's still a relatively new technology in the comms world, it's achieved world-wide acceptance very rapidly. In fact, most businesses have replaced their "POTs" (Plain Old Telephones) with IP based devices and systems.

HOW DO CLOUD PHONES WORK?

Anyone with a reliable internet connection can access cloud communications. Essentially, the system works by delivering a phone service through your internet connection, instead of using traditional wired connections from a local phone company. Modern IP based platforms convert traditional analogue phone signals into digital signals that can move over the internet. You can access cloud and IP based systems in several ways. For instance:

Using an ATA

An analogue terminal adapter turns an ordinary phone into a cloud phone.

Using an IP Phone

An IP Phone connects directly to the internet, instead of going through a landline service.

Using a direct connection

A cloud UC service provider can directly connect you to another cloud user.
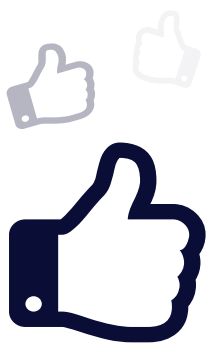
THE BENEFITS OF CLOUD UC

The growth of cloud communications and cloud-based UC solutions is like the internet revolution we saw back in the 90s. Cloud UC not only gives businesses additional features from their phone connections but also delivers serious cost savings too.

The main benefits include:

Cost savings

Companies can save you on calls by making connections over the internet. Because VoIP and video works by sending and receiving digital packets of data over the web, you can enjoy cheaper calls to anywhere in the world. Additionally, there are none of the up-front costs associated with a fixed-line service.

Better flexibility

Unlike standard PSTN or ISDN lines, VoIP offers significantly greater flexibility to businesses. You can increase or decrease the number of channels or users using your services virtually instantly. What's more, you only pay for the services you use.

Increased mobility

Because you don't need to be tied to a specific landline to use cloud, this opens the door for remote working and global employees. Cloud Communications also provides a fitting solution for the huge percentage of deskless (on the field) employees in the community.

Faster deployment

Cloud Communications is easy-to-use, quick to install and cheap. This means that companies of any shape or size can begin to reap the benefits without any up-front investment on line installations or hardware. Many cloud phones are plug-and-play devices that cause minimal disruption to daily operations.

Rich feature sets

Finally, Cloud UC works in collaboration with the various applications available on your computer or IP phone. This means that you can access more than just voice connections. Cloud telephony often comes with access to video calling, voicemail, click-to-call services on websites, recording services, messaging and presence information - among other things.

Cloud Communications is an efficient, cost-effective, and highly immersive way for today's companies to make the most of the power of the cloud and a solid internet connection.

VIDEO

In the era of UC&C, the days of assuming that communication belongs solely in the realm of voice is over.

Thanks to digital transformation, the rise of HD video and audio, and an ever-increasing selection of conferencing environments, from virtual meeting rooms to huddle rooms, video is more crucial than ever. However, while it's fair to say that video gets more attention these days, it's also worth noting that it's been a part of the communication conversation for quite some time. In fact, back in 2012, 93% of internal comms professionals already thought video would be critical to communication.

THE BENEFITS OF VIDEO COMMUNICATIONS

Video is a solution to various challenges in internal communication. After all, humans naturally respond better to a combination of images and audio.

89% of employees feel that video helps them to **connect better** to their co-workers.

Video technology:

Reduces the need for travel: When you can create face-to-face communication using video conferencing and virtual meeting rooms, there's no need for costly travel. People can attend meetings without ever leaving their office.

Increased productivity: Video is naturally immersive, in a world of globally-dispersed teams, video ensures that everyone can be active in the same discussion. What's more, combine video with conference room systems like digital whiteboards and screen sharing, and you have the perfect set-up for collaboration.

Supports humanised remote working: Not only does video calling and conferencing make telecommuting and remote working more effective, it also ensures that no-one in your dispersed workforce feels out of the loop. Video allows for deeper connections regardless of where call attendees might be, by providing access to non-verbal cues and body language.

"Video is now part of our everyday lives. It's improving remote communication, driving greater collaboration and making meeting experiences more engaging than never before.**"**

Daniel Yin, Head of Innovation EMEA at RingCentral

CHOOSING THE RIGHT VIDEO SERVICE

The key to embracing video in UC&C is making sure that you get the right service to support your needs. For instance, while all enterprises need high-quality AV (audio-visual) systems, some will need a wider range of features compared to others. Before you invest in video for your business, make sure you look at:

⚙ **The number of participants you need to serve:** Consider how many people are likely to take part in your video conferencing strategy. Are you facilitating the occasional group meeting, and one-on-one conference, or enterprise-wide conversations?

⚙ **Ease of use:** It doesn't matter how effective your video conferencing service is if people can't figure out how to use it. Make sure your video systems, room strategies, and even your virtual conferencing tools are easy to set-up, navigate, and use. Otherwise, you might miss out on a great connection opportunity.

⚙ **Types of meetings:** Some video services will allow you to launch different virtual meeting rooms depending on the kind of meeting you're hosting. If you plan on exploring a range of different conference types, then you need to make sure your video service can support you.

⚙ **Strong mobile experience:** One of the biggest benefits of video conferencing is the fact that it can connect people regardless of where they are in the world. Sometimes, this will mean letting your employees connect from mobile devices. Make sure your video service can do this securely.

⚙ **Application integration:** Finally, integration is key in the UC&C world. If you want a fully unified experience for your employees, then you need to make sure your video services integrate with the systems you're already using. A video service that integrates well opens the door to presentations, collaboration, and more.

MESSAGING

Instant messaging is a common component of the UC&C experience.

We're living in an agile world where people need access to information as quickly as possible. Instant messaging facilitates this by allowing people to communicate with each other in real-time, through IM software on the internet.

Way back when IM first began, in the 90s, it was primarily a solution for people who wanted to chat with friends and family over the internet. Today, instant messaging has emerged as a powerful tool for businesses too, and the messaging revolution is growing.

THE ROLE OF PERSISTENT CHAT IN BUSINESS

Communication is the heart and soul of any company.

The more we discover new modes of communication that make connecting and collaborating with colleagues easier, the faster a business can grow. For instance, messaging applications today don't just give you another way to send content to a co-worker.

A messaging app provides:

Real-time communication

Integration with web and mobile apps

File-sharing solutions

Presence features (so you can see who's online)

Data recording for information governance

Before instant messaging, you either had to hope someone was available to take a call, visit them in person, or send an email and wait (potentially days) for a response.

Instant messaging allows for a persistent stream of information to be shared in real-time.

"While being able to get that instant response is key, there are also times when you need to promote that instant message to a call or video meeting, and that's where an integrated collaboration tool is far more effective than a messaging app.**"**

Sunny Dhami, Director of Product Marketing for EMEA at RingCentral

With messaging, employees can see which staff members are available at any given time, and access the help they need to complete tasks, serve customers or excel at projects.

WHY MESSAGING IS KILLING EMAIL

Before instant messaging, if you wanted to share a file, or connect with a colleague who wasn't in the same office as you, you needed to set up a call or send an email. While email offered a great opportunity to share easy-to-track knowledge around the world, it also comes with a host of problems, all the way from unreliable servers, to poor security.

Instant messaging, on the other hand, offers:

Real-time communication

with instant insights into who's online and available to answer your questions.

Persistent connections

for people around the world. You don't have to worry about someone from across the globe feeling "left out of the loop." Instant messaging systems allow users to scroll back through previous messages. Some even allow users to tag important posts.

Convenience

Instant messaging works just as well on a smartphone, tablet, laptop, or computer. In some cases, you won't even need to download an app, as WebRTC makes it possible to connect through a web page.

Team-building

Instant messaging can allow for a more natural flow of conversation than email, which allows for better team-building, and enhanced context in a communication and collaboration environment.

Better collaboration

People from around the world can talk in real-time about project ideas and changes. This means that tasks get done faster.

Archiving

Some instant messaging platforms come equipped with record-keeping functionalities, so you can search through past conversations for important information and maintain data for compliance purposes.

In an environment where employees and customers alike want answers instantly, we no longer have time to wait for emails to load and files to open. Instant messaging supports the speed of the agile workforce, with a real-time approach to constant communication.

TEAM COLLABORATION

The concept of collaboration isn't new.

Colleagues and co-workers have long collaborated over projects within an office or work environment. However, as work becomes less of a "place", and more of a selection of mutual goals, the methods we use to collaborate are changing. We're moving away from the individual and siloed groups within an organisation, to embrace a wider, more connected team.

In fact, according to a report from Microsoft, we currently operate in twice as many teams today as we did five years ago. Combine that knowledge with the fact that we're seeing four times as many people working remotely these days, and you can see why so many companies are searching for the right tools to help people work more efficiently together.

THE RISE OF COLLABORATION TOOLS

As companies continue to spread around the world, driven by remote and flexible working, collaboration tools are how we connect the professionals who simply can't engage in face-to-face work.

Not only do collaboration tools increase team efficiency by **as much as 20%**, but **40%** of workers say they'd pay for their own to make their lives easier.

With collaboration tools:

1 **Tracking Projects is Easier**

Online collaboration tools come with various capabilities that help team members to see the evolution of their projects over a certain time. Whether you want to see who last made a change to a document, or you want to roll changes back to see previous versions, there are plenty of options. It's never been easier to manage a project and make sure that everyone stays on the same page.

2 **Teams Can Connect Anywhere**

Increasingly, online collaboration tools are offering solutions that work on both mobile and desktop devices. This means that as long as your team members have an internet connection, they can contribute to projects and collaborate with their peers. Co-workers around the world can address the same project at the same time. What's more, many collaboration tools also come with instant messaging facilities attached, so that workers can communicate in real-time too.

3 **Projects Evolve Faster**

In the past, working with a remote, or distributed team would mean sending versions of a project over an email, waiting for edits to be provided, and then waiting again for those changes to be approved. With collaboration tools, projects move much faster, as people can communicate, edit, and make annotations in real-time. The result is more satisfied employees who don't have to sit around waiting to engage in their next piece of work, and happier clients too!

4 Access Expertise Anywhere

Because of their cloud-focused nature, team collaboration tools also mean that you can access expertise from anywhere in the world. This means that you're no longer restricted to hiring nearby people from your team. You can bring together the most advanced minds from around the world to contribute to the same project at the same time.

5 Easy Document Management and Reporting

Finally, collaboration tools ensure that the same files are all stored in the same place. This means that information doesn't get lost or locked away in an email stream. Anyone who needs to join the project can access the same information as the rest of their team instantly and searching through historical information is quick and simple. What's more, many collaboration systems also make reporting easier, for industries that need to adhere to strong compliance rules and regulations.

> **"**Team collaboration software is a must for any forward-thinking business.**"**
>
> **Rob Scott, UC Today**

UC FOR SMALL BUSINESS

Unified Communication is a concept that appeals to businesses from almost any background, of any size. After all, one of the biggest issues that any company faces with communication, is that if they want to embrace the latest, and most efficient channels like video conferencing and instant messaging, using multiple separate applications can be expensive, time-consuming and overwhelming.
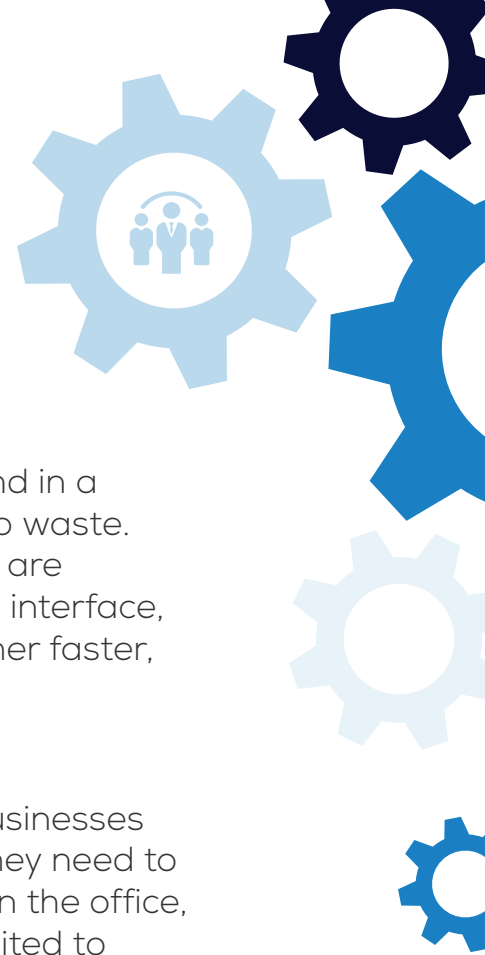
Today's small businesses can benefit from things like video calling, instant messaging, and WebRTC just as much as larger companies. At the same time, small firms are under increasing pressure to find not only a system that ties these different applications and services together but minimises costs too. To compete, any small company needs to innovate quickly, communicate constantly and keep expenses low.

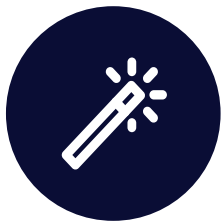**Enter Unified Communications.**

THE BENEFITS OF UC
FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

As small businesses struggle to boost their external connections with customers and enhance their internal communications among employees, UC is becoming a powerful solution for many companies. UC can integrate desk phones, PCs, and mobile devices with a range of additional capabilities like voice recording, video calling, and instant messaging, so that anyone within a small organisation can connect with the right person, at the right time, using any device.

UC helps small businesses to keep their teams running smoothly with as little initial investment as possible. In fact, cloud-based UC services can even eliminate the traditional CapEx spend associated with on-premise communication.

In the small business environment, UC:

Enhances productivity: Time is money, and in a small business space, there's no money to waste. UC ensures that all your communications are accessible through the same streamlined interface, meaning that employees can work together faster, and more efficiently.

Promotes productivity: With UC, small businesses can give employees access to the tools they need to communicate efficiently whether they're in the office, or on the move. Staff don't have to be limited to waiting for emails or trying to connect through Cloud Communications. They can engage in everything from video conferencing to persistent chat with IM.
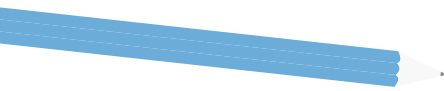
Reduces office space costs: Small businesses are under incredible pressure to keep costs low. As remote working grows more popular, UC provides small companies with a cost-effective, and cloud-based way to access expertise from across the globe. With remote workers, firms don't need to pay for as much physical office space, leading to reduced operating costs.

IMPLEMENTING UC IN A SMALL BUSINESS

The key to successfully bringing UC tools into the small business environment is working backwards from the user. Small companies need to make sure that they're delivering a UC service that empowers their workers, streamlines productivity and provides new opportunities. However, they don't have extra money to spend on services that don't suit their team.

To make the most of your small business UC strategy, begin by looking at your business plan, and discussing the needs of your staff. The more you know about what your employees need to thrive in your company, the easier it will be to choose a cost–effective UC vendor.

Additionally, remember to look for scalability and interoperability. While your business might be small now, it won't necessarily stay that way forever. If your organisation starts to grow, you need to ensure that your UC strategy can grow with it.

UC FOR MID-MARKET ORGANISATIONS

Mid-sized companies are in an excellent position to take advantage of Unified Communication.

Just like smaller businesses and larger enterprises, mid-market groups are looking for ways reduce costs and keep productivity high, in an environment where the communication landscape is constantly changing.

Today's mid-market firms know that relying on outdated PBXs and slow email services could make it harder for them to compete in an increasingly saturated marketplace. As such, many mid-sized companies are relying on the mobility, cross-platform flexibility and scalability that a UC strategy can bring.

7x In fact, market penetration in cloud UC is expected to grow by **7 times in the mid-market** by 2020.

HOW UC SUPPORTS THE MID-MARKET

Mid-Market UC adoption is expected to grow at a faster rate than any other segment. Perhaps that's due to all the benefits that a mid-market UC strategy can bring.

For example, used correctly, a Unified Communications plan:

Reduces costs: Every company needs to keep costs low and ROI high if it wants success. Mid-market businesses are turning to UC to lower costs, as it provides them with access to robust communication tools, without the initial capital expenditure, or on-going maintenance of an on-premise service.

Improves productivity: Productivity is a critical concern for mid-sized companies. Unified Communications in the cloud gives teams a full range of applications and services intended to streamline workflow and boost performance.

Supports remote working: As mid-sized companies continue to grow, they may want to take advantage of the increasingly dispersed and global talent pool. UC allows firms to offer staff from around the world the same access to high-quality tools. It also promotes remote working for nearby employees too.

Encourages innovation: Mid-market companies want to make sure that they're on the cutting-edge of technology. With UC, they can change and adapt the services they access according to their developing needs.

UC GIVES MID-MARKET ORGANISATIONS SPACE TO GROW

With unified communication and even UC&C solutions, mid-market organisations can begin to map a path to future growth in their chosen vertical. After all, UC ensures that today's companies can tap into the freedom of scalability of the cloud, making workforces more agile, and innovative. When all communication services are connected on the same pane of glass, mid-market enterprises can simultaneously improve internal and external exchanges.

Of course, as with any mid-market growth plan, UC adoption requires careful planning and consideration to be successful. Though mid-market enterprises may have a bigger budget to work with than smaller companies, that doesn't mean that they're free to waste their money on UC services that don't adequately support their staff. Before you launch your mid-market UC plan, remember to:

Ensure you understand your workforce and what they need from their UC tools: Your team might need video conferencing services, instant messaging, call recording tools, and more.

Determine your goals: If you know your goals going into your UC strategy, you'll be able to measure your success. For instance, do you want to enhance agility, improve engagement, or simply keep your mid-market company as productive as possible?

Consider your current technology ecosystem: If you've already got on-premises investments to worry about, you'll need a UC system that can integrate with those tools, to give you a cost-efficient hybrid environment.

UC FOR ENTERPRISE

With so many people spread across a diverse environment, communication in the enterprise isn't always easy. Large enterprises need to serve hundreds, if not thousands of employees, from remote workers to global staff, and on-premises office hires. It's no wonder that many of today's enterprises are using communication platforms that operate in inefficient silos.

Old-fashioned forms of communication, like email and standard voice calls, are unable to keep up with our current age of agility and innovation. What enterprises need today is a truly unified communications platform that seamlessly integrates with various applications, devices, and hardware solutions throughout the business.

THE BENEFITS OF
UC FOR THE ENTERPRISE

As the communication strategies available to the enterprise environment continue to evolve, UC is the simplest way for companies to converge their strategies for connectivity. Whether you're trying to address the changing needs of a multi-generational workforce with instant messaging and audio conferencing, or you need to integrate new hires quickly into your business processes, UC makes communication simpler for the enterprise.

> "Enabling a cloud ecosystem and integrating with the wider tools used in an organisation not only enhances productivity but can also improve the tools that are already being used."
>
> **Steve Rafferty, Enterprise VP for EMEA at RingCentral**

UC can:

Simplify onboarding: Large enterprises can see a lot of turnover, and don't have time to train new employees to use a diverse set of tools. A UC system makes it easier to onboard an employee with a single pane of glass environment.

Reduce costs: Maintaining and managing multiple carrier contracts can easily drain corporate resources. Unified communications can cut costs for enterprises, so they can invest in developing new products and serving customers instead.

Facilitate innovation: As the enterprise environment grows more competitive, many companies find themselves restricted by the limitations of their standard PBX. A UC solution offers greater flexibility and scale for a digitally-transforming business.

Provide a better customer and users experience: Because employees can work better together using a simple and interconnected range of tools, they struggle with fewer issues, and solve customer problems faster.

IMPLEMENTING UC IN THE ENTERPRISE

UC in the enterprise is all about breaking down the walls between a large and dispersed workforce. UC can bring people together through the right channels, at the right times. In today's digitally-transforming environment, UC could be the way forward for many enterprises, but it all starts with the right strategy:

1 Understand Your Current Environment

Begin by knowing your existing communication network, and what you need to build on. Many enterprise companies will already have made significant investments in on-premise tools and desk phones. This means that they need a UC strategy that can take advantage of that existing hardware.

2 Assess Your Workforce

Make sure that you know what your employees need to perform well in an enterprise environment. Some companies will need to provide different levels of access and enhanced tools to certain segments of the business depending on their day-to-day tasks. For instance, your marketing team might need their UC tools to integrate with a CRM system, while a tech team needs access to analytics.

3 Get Support from the Right Vendor

Finally, enterprises need to choose the right UC vendor to guide them through their digital transformation. Vendor alignment and interoperability need to be defined during the "vision" stage of the UC journey.

MAXIMISE USER ADOPTION

UC&C is all about improving the communications experience of users, boosting internal and external connections, and making workflows smoother.

While UC&C can deliver a host of fantastic benefits to modern companies of any size or vertical, it can only accomplish amazing things when the business has the right adoption strategy in place. After all, even the best system can't do much for your company if your employees refuse to use it.

While some staff members will naturally embrace the potential of UC&C systems, others will be less open to change. This means that companies need an adoption strategy that helps them to roll their solutions out seamlessly throughout the entire organisation.

> **"**Change management and deployment are two of the biggest challenges for success. Working with a partner who prioritises these elements is the only way to ensure maximum benefits of the investment into UC&C.**"**
>
> **John Batty, Director of Professional Services and Sales Engineering at RingCentral**

UC&C can be a powerful addition to any communication strategy, but you'll need to prioritise adoption before you see the benefits.

Here are 4 key things your UC strategy needs for mass adoption:

Fantastic User Experience (UX)

For a UC&C strategy to enjoy better adoption, your staff needs to believe that their lives will be better (or at least easier) when they start using the system. Choosing a strategy designed to support good user experience should help to make your UC&C strategy more effective.

Begin by considering the difficulties your employees face each day and discussing their needs with them from a communication and collaboration standpoint. The more you understand how your employees work and innovate, the easier it will be to choose a service with the right UX.

Create a Single-Pane-of-Glass Environment

As the concept of unified communications has evolved, we've seen countless vendors striving to achieve a "single-pane-of-glass" experience for their users. This simply means that users should be able to safely access all the UC features they need using the same app interface.

With a single pane of glass solution, your employees shouldn't have to waste time switching between various applications to retrieve important information or speak to colleagues. The result of single-pane-of-glass tools is not only a happier employee but a more productive workforce too.

Make Sure You're Device Agnostic

We're living in a world obsessed with mobility and choice. Today's employees want to be able to use mobile devices, tablets, and laptops when it suits them, which means that the UC&C service you choose needs to provide the same excellent experience on any platform.

As the remote working environment grows, and BYOD (bring your own device) methodologies become more popular, modern companies will need to find a solution for UC that users can access easily, no matter what device they happen to have at their fingertips.

Explore WebRTC

Speaking of making access to UC&C systems simpler, WebRTC can improve the efficiency of UC devices by making sure that users don't need to download and install any software before they can start connecting with colleagues and customers. WebRTC enables your web browsers to function as video and voice endpoints, with simple click-to-call solutions boosting efficiency in any environment.

WebRTC makes onboarding new members of a team as simple as possible, and it also ensures that employees don't have to worry about having the right tech specifications to join into a conference call or collaborate on a project. All your staff need to do to take part in a WebRTC UC platform, is visit an URL and log in.

UC&C

BUYER'S
CHECKLIST

UC&C, or Unified Communication and Collaboration, is a market that's growing in popularity by the day.

Whether you're a small business trying to improve the productivity and performance of your company, or a large enterprise striving to compete in a saturated marketplace, UC&C can be a powerful tool for growth.

Of course, like any stage in business development, or any strategy for digital transformation, you'll need a careful plan to make sure that your UC&C implementation is as successful as possible. That plan starts with figuring out what kind of UC&C solution is right for your business. There's no one-size-fits-all strategy that will work for everyone. However, there are a number of things every organisation needs to consider when launching their UC&C strategy.

Make sure you go through this UC&C buyer's checklist before you start investing.

The value of UC&C is expected to reach more than **$143.5 Billion** by the end of 2024.

1 Why Are You Buying UC&C?

One of the biggest mistakes that companies make when implementing a UC&C service is beginning by asking themselves "how" they're going to get started with UC&C, instead of "why" they're taking this journey.

Before you even begin looking at vendors, ask yourself what you want to accomplish with UC&C. What do your employees need to make them more productive? How will UC&C simplify your workflow, and make your business more efficient? Depending on your business, vertical and niche, you're likely to have your own specific needs.

For instance:

- You may need a system that helps you to keep a highly-diverse and mobile workforce connected while they're in the field.

- You may be looking for a way to enable your teams to work together more efficiently, reducing costs and improving productivity.

- You may want to boost collaboration with tools that allow people to work together on projects in a more streamlined way.

Before you start browsing through technology, bring your business leaders together and think about how you can use UC&C to make your business more competitive. The answer to "Why should we implement UC&C" should never be just "because our competitors have."

You need the why before you can begin to determine the how.

2

How Will It Help You Deliver Better Customer Experience?

Today, **62% of companies** view customer experience to be a competitive differentiator - and that number keeps growing.

As more companies continue to enter the marketplace, customers are looking to commit their loyalty to someone who can offer next-level service and support. Your UC&C strategy can help you with this, by giving you a way to unify your workforce in the search for client solutions.

For instance, with UC&C you can ensure that your employees have the collaboration tools, presence information and communication strategies to work together on solving customer problems. This way, your employees get more satisfaction from your jobs, and your end-users get the experience they deserve.

At the same time, a UC&C strategy can provide a unified hub of contextual information for employees to access when they're addressing customer queries in an omnichannel environment. With UC&C, call centre agents don't need to switch between applications to pull up customer information from an instant message when they escalate the conversation to a VoIP call. With all the information in the same channel, issues can be resolved faster, leading to greater satisfaction.

Before you invest in any specific UC&C strategy, ask yourself how it's going to help you to deliver a better customer experience all-around. Will it need to integrate with your CRM system so that you can benefit from client analytics and predictive technologies? Will your UC&C service need a call centre solution built-in?

The more you know about how your CX and UC&C strategies intertwine, the more successful your investment will be.

3

Do You Have a Plan for Implementation

As powerful as the right UC&C solution can be, you'll never see the full potential of your strategy until you have the right plan in place for adoption.

You'll need to make sure that you know how you're going to roll your new services and features out to your team.

Begin by asking yourself who is going to be using your UC&C service every day, and what they're going to need to get the most out of your new tools. Ultimately, the purpose of a UC&C strategy is to empower and engage your workforce. If you're simply deploying new technology to "Keep up with the Joneses" then you've missed the point of UC&C. Take the time to analyse and understand your workforce, so you can determine what kind of teams you need to set up, what devices you need, and which software you want to use.

Ask yourself:

- Who will be using your UC&C services?
- What kind of tasks do they perform every day?
- Where could their existing processes be improved by UC&C?
- Which devices do your teams use now, and how will they integrate with new strategies?
- How many of your workers are mobile, or on the field, and will need access to cloud-based UC&C resources?

Which Deployment Method Is Right for You?

4

As mentioned above, there's no single strategy for implementing a UC&C service.

Some smaller companies who are just launching their communication strategy for the first time might find it easier to embrace a fully-hosted cloud model.

After all, UC&C on the cloud comes with no initial investment or installation to worry about, which is ideal for companies on a tight budget. At the same time, the cloud offers the scalability and versatility that many companies need in the agile marketplace.

"The cloud provides numerous benefits such as cost savings, scalability, redundancy, and the ability to future proof yourself, which ultimately provides peace of mind for a company making the move to the cloud."

Irina Kirnos, Product Marketing Manager
for EMEA at RingCentral

On the other hand, some larger enterprises that have been in business for a while may find that it's easier to maintain some or all of their existing on-premise hardware. Depending on the needs of your employees, you may feel that it's easier to simply add new features to the systems they're already using. Alternatively, you might embrace a hybrid cloud model that allows you to continue getting the most out of your on-prem investment, while you explore the potential of the cloud too.

Today, many businesses are beginning to embrace the cloud on a deeper level. However, that doesn't mean that there isn't a space left for on-premises technology.

The key is making sure that the provider you choose can accommodate your deployment preferences and grow with you as your business evolves.

5

Will You Need Call Centre Functionality?

Creating a truly "unified" communication stack means finding a way to bridge the gap between both your external and internal systems for connectivity.

Often, a UC&C strategy will begin by combining the different tools that an internal team uses to communicate and collaborate throughout the day.

For instance, this might mean placing screen sharing, file sharing, video conferencing, VoIP and instant messaging tools on the same platform.

However, it is possible to go beyond those initial integrations with your UC&C service, to combine your internal communications strategy, with the systems you use to connect with consumers and clients too. For instance, some of the more innovative UC&C solutions in the market today come with contact centre services that allow you to escalate calls to the right agent at the right time, check for presence, and communicate with teams about specific client problems.

A UC&C solution can also support an omnichannel customer service strategy – something that's growing increasingly important in the modern marketplace.

In a world where your customer expects to be able to speak to you on the channel they prefer, Unified Communications gives your employees a presence on everything from social media to web chat, SMS, and more.

"Providing all of your employees who are using either UC or CC with the same set of tools on the same platform enables greater levels of collaboration, increased productivity, and exceptional levels of customer service."

Shaun Spivak, Director of Customer Care for EMEA at RingCentral

6 Is Your UC&C Service Mobile Enabled?

The remote workforce is on the rise, with 50% of all UK employees ready to embrace a flexible working schedule by 2020.

It's not just the United Kingdom that's embracing this method of work either. Companies around the world have begun to discover that remote workers are more productive, satisfied and efficient than their in-office counterparts.

As the remote workplace grows increasingly popular, today's UC&C strategies must be prepared to suit a range of working strategies. This means that any service you choose needs to work just as well on a smartphone or tablet, as it does on a desktop or laptop.

It's not just the remote workforce that's driving the demand for mobile UC&C either. Additional trends like BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) which empower employees to perform tasks on their preferred technology is pushing this trend too. At the same time, it seems that an increasing percentage of the business world involves staff members who don't work behind a desk. Field workers, retail reps, and people who travel for business can't be restricted to a specific space.

Whether you have a current mobility strategy in place, or you're beginning to adjust your workplace environment to suit the needs of a digital workforce, your UC&C solution must be equipped to tap into the potential of mobility.

7

Which Endpoints and Accessories Will You Need?

While investing in a cloud-based UC&C strategy is a great way to reduce the initial outlay for your communication stack, you'll still need to think carefully about how you can make the most out of your UC&C system with the right selection of endpoints and accessories.

For those with a BYOD system already in place, there may be no need to invest in any hardware at all. Instead, employees can simply access the tools they need on their phones and use their devices to make calls or join video conferences when necessary. However, for larger companies, it's likely that a more refined endpoint strategy will be necessary. Depending on how your staff work best, there are various endpoints and accessories you can consider.

For instance:

- You may need an ATA adapter to help you access your VoIP.

- To conduct audio conversations, you might need a softphone, desktop phones, or simply a headset that cancels out excess noise for your users.

- Conference phones can help to add more functionality and quality assurance to meetings, and there are even personal speakerphones available for smaller meetings.

Some particularly innovative enterprise brands have even begun to invest in room systems that integrate with their UC&C strategies. For instance, a room set-up for either a traditional conference space or huddle room could include a digital whiteboard, conference phone, and webcam for video calling purposes.

8 Which Critical IT Systems Will It Need to Integrate With?

While many different factors can make or break the success of a UC&C implementation, few things are more important than integration in the modern landscape.

Whether you're building a UC&C strategy from scratch, or you're designing a solution to work with your existing on-premise equipment, you need a system that's flexible enough to integrate securely with the services that you rely on every day.

Integration in the UC&C space goes beyond simply making sure that you can take VoIP calls on your existing desk phones or set up video conference calls on the same screen as your instant messaging facilities. An integration-friendly UC&C service will need to connect with a host of different applications, including:

⚙ **File storage systems:** can your team access the essential files they need on the cloud to collaborate quickly on projects?

⚙ **Email services:** Will your employees be able to send emails using the same single-pane-of-glass interface?

⚙ **CRM solutions:** Can your team check customer data and perform analytics within their UC&C services?

Before implementing any new UC&C service, sit down with your IT team and figure out which services your employees use every day that will need to work inside of your unified communication strategy.

9 Will It Be Compatible with Your Existing Telecoms System?

As mentioned above, there are various components involved in designing an integration-friendly UC&C strategy.

Once you've made sure that your users will be able to access a simple and streamlined workflow with tools that integrate with their existing CRM, email, and file storage strategies, you'll need to ensure that your existing hardware will work securely, and reliably with your new communication strategy.

Many larger companies invest a lot of time and money into choosing the right telecom system for their employees. If you already have video conferencing systems, desk phones, and call recording solutions in place, then sometimes the last thing you want is to have to re-purchase all of your investments so that they align with your new UC&C service.

Look for a UC&C vendor that can offer integration with a host of different hardware endpoints, including any headsets or desktop phones you plan on using as part of a contact centre environment. Your UC&C services and your endpoints need to work together seamlessly to provide the best possible communication strategy.

10 Do You Have Security, Compliance and Privacy Covered?

Finally, it's crucial to make sure that any update you make to your unified communication stack, doesn't come at the expense of exceptional security and compliance.

With regulations all the way from the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) to consider, every business needs to take the time to address their privacy and security issues carefully and figure out how their UC&C services fit into a safe environment.

Bring your security experts and CIOs together to figure out which regulations and rules you'll need to implement alongside your UC&C services to protect yourself from human error. At the same time, you can also look for a UC&C vendor that offers next-level security and compliance services in the form of robust encryptions, session border controllers (SBCs), firewalls, reporting, and more.
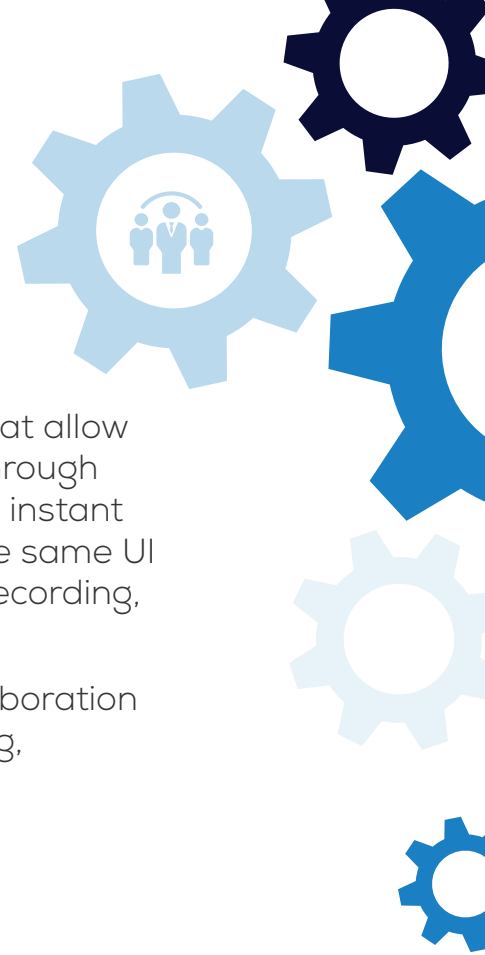
When it comes to privacy, think about how granular the permission levels are for your UC&C tools, and whether you have solutions in place to protect against the inherent security risks that come with BYOD strategies. Consider how your new UC&C will store recordings, and whether you can put additional steps in place to ensure that you're getting the right permissions to hold onto and use customer data.

Just as you have a plan for business success or disaster recovery, the right plan for a secure UC&C implementation could make or break your firm's future. Make sure that you're prepared to optimise your results and minimise your risk.

UC&C

FAQs

Q: What's the Difference Between UC, and UC&C?

A: The term "Unified Communications" refers to the systems that allow companies to access the tools they need for communication through a single application or service. That means companies can use instant messaging, email, faxing, VoIP and video collaboration from the same UI (User Interface). UC services can also include call monitoring, recording, and quality services.

Unified Communication and Collaboration, or UC&C adds collaboration services to the UC mix, such as file sharing tools, screen sharing, scheduling, and calendars.
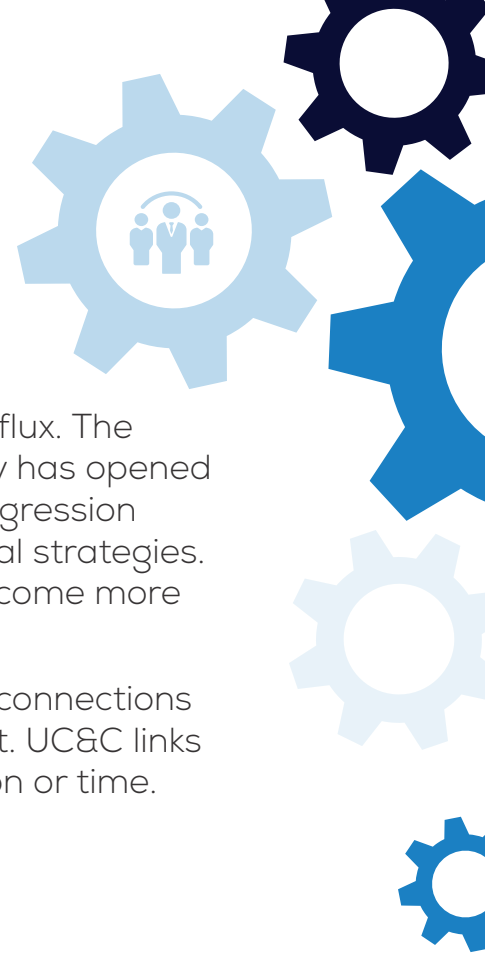
Q: What is UCaaS?

A: UCaaS is "Unified Communications as a Service." It's a sub-category of Software as a Service, or SaaS, wherein a service provider delivers software products through the web. UCaaS allows companies to access their UC solutions through a cloud environment. With UCaaS, companies can scale up or down as necessary, and pay only for the services they use.

Types of UCaaS packages can vary but may include video conferencing tools, VoIP services, messaging tools, and more. Some systems come with solutions for collaboration as well as communication.

Q: What is the Digital Workspace?

A: The digital workspace is one of the DX trends currently driving UC&C. In a digital workspace, work becomes less of a specific location, and more of a shared selection of goals and projects that can be carried out using specific tools and technologies. The digital workspace supports remote working, by allowing employees to access the same tools over the cloud, on any device or system.

The digital workspace allows today's staff to personalise their work experiences, while UC&C unifies people across a range of backgrounds and environments, to help them collaborate on the same projects.

Q: How Does UC&C Empower Digital Transformation

A: The current business environment is in a persistent state of flux. The seemingly constant delivery of new innovations and technology has opened the door for something called "digital transformation" - the progression that businesses make from "traditional" methodologies to digital strategies. Embracing the right digital techniques allows companies to become more agile and innovative.

Unified Collaboration and Communication facilitates constant connections between team members in this "always on" digital environment. UC&C links dispersed employees with core resources, regardless of location or time.

Q: Does AI Have a Place in UC&C?

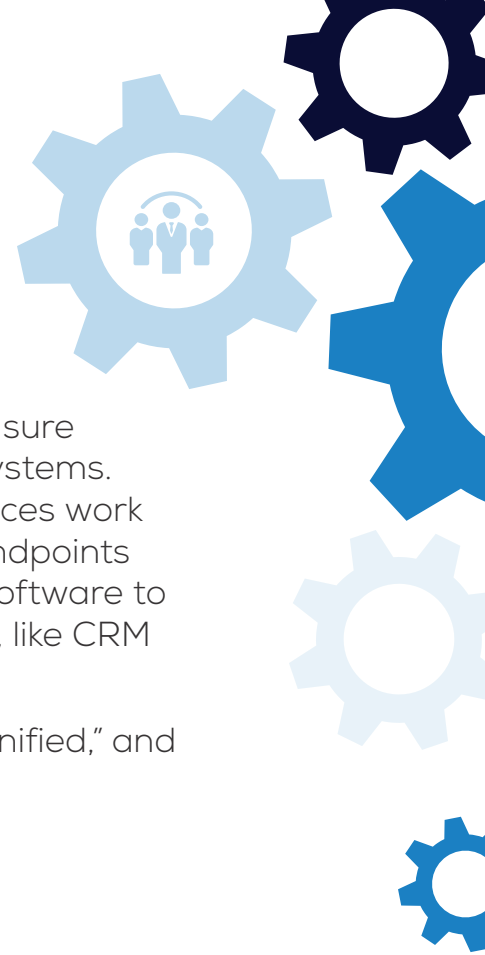**A:** In a digitally-transforming environment, AI seems to be a constant consideration for modern businesses. In the UC&C system, AI can help to improve business performance and productivity in several ways. For instance, virtual assistants can offer suggestions on how to complete complex projects or help contact centre agents deal with difficult customers.

Chat bots can introduce a new level of self-service to the communication space, while analytics allow workers to tap into a unified hub of useful client information within a UC&C environment. Increasingly, AI and advanced analytics services are finding their way into the UC space.

Q: How Does UC&C Benefit the Contact Centre?

A: Contact centres are one of the biggest adopters of UC&C technology. While chatbots, FAQs, and other services are beginning to reduce the number of people getting through to contact centres these days, the calls that do get through can be more complicated and require specific assistance from the right agent.

UC&C technology allows agents to collaborate with various departments quickly to solve customer problems. By ensuring strong cross-departmental interactions, UC&C technology can help companies to deliver better customer experiences.

Q: What is Interoperability in UC&C?

A: In the UC&C space, interoperability is the process of making sure that your UC&C services work perfectly alongside your other systems. Interoperability can include ensuring that your new UC&C services work with your existing call recording systems, video conferencing endpoints or peripheral devices. On the other hand, you may need your software to integrate with other tools you're using in your technology stack, like CRM systems and Email services.

Interoperability helps to ensure that a UC experience is truly "unified," and contributes to a single-pane-of-glass UX.

Q: What is WebRTC?

A: WebRTC is another term frequently used in discussions about UC&C. Web Real-Time Communication is a free and open-source solution designed to provide mobile applications and web browsers with real-time communication solutions using simple APIs or "application programming interfaces."

For companies that want to access UC&C without downloading any additional software or tools, WebRTC allows video and audio communication to work within a web page, through peer-to-peer communication. WebRTC eliminates the need for plugins and native apps.

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